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The Crucible, Act II, by Arthur Miller
Literary Analysis: Allusion

An **allusion** is a reference to some well-known thing or idea. In our society, for example, people often allude to sports, phenomena: "This project is the Super Bowl for us." Common allusions often take their reference from the surrounding society, so it's little wonder that the Salem Puritans allude to their religion as knowledgeably and as frequently as we allude to sports.

DIRECTIONS: Use a dictionary or other reference work to explain the italicized allusion in each of the following items.

1. At the beginning of Act II, a kind of *cold war* exists between John and Elizabeth because of past events.
Historical - The cold war was characterized by tension and suspicion which is also true of P and E's relationships.
2. Although an honest and strong man, John Proctor has an *Achilles heel*—his relationship to Abigail.
Mythological - Abigail is the only fault (weakness) in Proctor's character.
3. Something between a *siren* and a *harpy*, Abigail proves to be Proctor's undoing.
Mythological - Abigail is a siren and harpy because she is attractive but very dangerous and destructive.
4. Reverend Hale brings an *ivory-tower* approach to his examination that ill fits the world he finds.
literary - Hale isolates himself + also makes himself the superior of the people of Salem through his knowledge.
5. With the *sword of Damocles* above his head, Proctor flusters and cannot remember the Ten Commandments.
Biblical - Proctor's sword was his adultery as it ~~the~~ could destroy him at any moment.